



Security Council

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LETTER DATED 23 NOVEMBER 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO
THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a press release issued by the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in connection with certain
incidents that are purported to have taken place on 17 and 18 November 1999 on
the Russian-Georgian frontier (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its
annex distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of
the Russian Federation

The mass media, citing the Press Service of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, have already reported that on 17 November 1999 Russian helicopters, in the course of a military reconnaissance mission along a section of the highway leading from Itum-Kale to the State frontier with Georgia, in the area of the confluence of the Argun and Meshekhi rivers in Russian territory, discovered a rebel trans-shipment base. Not far from the base, the helicopters were fired on by an anti-aircraft battery and one helicopter was damaged.

As to the claim by the Georgian side that, during this operation, Russian helicopters ostensibly fired rounds into Georgian territory in the vicinity of the village of Shatili, Russian and Georgian military experts are currently conducting a joint investigation. We are also studying information from the Georgian side to the effect that on 18 November 1999 a Russian Su-25 warplane purportedly violated Georgian airspace. The outcome of the investigation will enable the appropriate conclusions to be drawn.

At the same time, attention has to be called to the fact that statements by Georgian officials on this subject, as well as the statement of 17 November 1999 issued by the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, contain accusations against the Russian Federation that are unacceptable in relations between friendly States.

We firmly reject assertions by the Georgian side that the Russian Federation committed "aggression" or a "criminal act" against Georgia. The Russian Federation favours friendly inter-State relations with Georgia and appeals to Tbilisi to cooperate in the fight against terrorism in the Caucasus.

We declare with all certainty that the threat to Georgia comes not from the Russian Federation, as some Georgian politicians would have us believe, but from international terrorists, and in the fight against them we are ready to work in concert with Georgia.
